

CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April - June 2005
Azerbaijan: Political Party Strengthening
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 112-A-00-02-00012-00
Project Dates: May 8, 2002 – August 7, 2006
Total Budget: \$2,380,000.00 Expenses to Date: \$1,841,037.57

I. SUMMARY

The International Republican Institute's programs are designed to help Azerbaijanis strengthen democracy through increasing their participation in the political process. IRI's programs primarily concentrate on two areas: political party strengthening and increasing the role of youth and women in the democratic process.

Political party strengthening is an area in which IRI has worked extensively in Azerbaijan and around the world. Parties are relied upon to represent the needs of the citizens; however, few political parties in Azerbaijan understand or reflect the needs of the people. IRI's program in Azerbaijan will assist the political parties in becoming more democratic internally and being more responsive to the demands of the public.

Increasing the role of youth in the political process is also a key component of IRI's program. Young men and women need to learn the tools to forge a successful democracy in the 21st century, and currently their needs are not being met. IRI will work to bridge the gap between young people and the political process so that the foundation can be laid for the future leadership of Azerbaijan.

Azeri women are generally disempowered and remain outside the political process. This is due to the discriminatory socio-economic status and social norms that discourage women's participation in public life. Political parties have women's branches, but they are small and weak. Parties particularly struggle to attract women into politics in the regions outside Baku. IRI will work with the women of Azerbaijan through civic education and public awareness as well as working with female candidates in the lead up to the parliamentary elections.

In April 2004, IRI started a two-and-a-half-year USAID extension to continue the development of political parties, as well as its work with youth and women activists.

II. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

IRI's programs primarily concentrate on two areas:

- 1) political party strengthening;
- 2) increasing the role of youth and women in the democratic process.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

This quarter IRI conducted training seminars for campaign managers and legislative assistants, training programs on political communications, and a quarterly regional youth conference. IRI

also continued to support four constituency offices and began work on a national public opinion survey.

Campaign Management Training

IRI conducted five two-day campaign management seminars in Baku for 144 campaign managers and their assistants. They were conducted on May 12-13, 2005, May 19-20, 2005, May 26-27, 2005, June 2-3, 2005 and June 16-17, 2005. These trainings are the start of a larger effort that will take place in the next quarter in which IRI will conduct campaign management trainings in 40 electoral districts.

These trainings are intended to provide campaign managers and volunteers with the necessary tools needed to effectively prepare for the 60-day campaign season that is expected to begin on September 7, 2005. Topics discussed were message development, get-out-the-vote, debate training, media training, and coalition building. Participants were from the election headquarters of independent candidates and representatives of some political parties. The breakdown of the participants by party that have attended the five training events are as follows:

“YES” block-9

Independents/NGOs-34

Azerbaijan Democratic Party -13

Yeni Azerbaijan Party -26

Popular Front Party -14

Musavat- 16

Azerbaijan National Independent Party -13

Umid-8

Adalat-6

Liberal Party-5

Political Communications Trainings

This quarter, IRI Azerbaijan conducted two two-day political communications seminars on June 13-14, 2005 and June 23-24, 2005, for activists of independent candidates as well as the political parties mentioned above. The goal of these seminars was to assist the party campaign managers to improve their relations with the media.

IRI has been conducting these seminars as an integral part of the party development and campaign development process. IRI has worked with them to teach them how to write an effective press release, how make the party leadership look good on camera, and how to work effectively with journalists. Topics over the two days included:

- a. The Role of the Communications Officer
- b. Public Relations
- c. Print Media
- d. Television, Radio, Internet
- e. Media Contact List

- f. Communications Plan and Strategy
- g. Political Advertising

Regional Youth Conference

On April 14-16, 2005, IRI conducted a youth conference entitled “Civic Activism: Moving from Ideas to Action” in Guba, Azerbaijan. Close to 50 youth attended the three-day event, including members of the youth branches from five Azerbaijani political parties (Popular Front, Musavat, Yeni Azerbaijan Party, Azerbaijan Democratic Party, Azerbaijan New Independent Party), Azerbaijani youth NGOs, and students from five northern Azerbaijani regions (Guba, Sheki, Baku, Sumgait, Naxchivan). The breakdown of the participants by parties and NGOs was as follows:

Yeni Azerbaijan Party – 10
Popular Front Party - 2
Musavat -4
NGOs- 21
Students/teachers/journalists -11

The format of the conference was largely interactive and included workshops on NGO formation, fundraising, and volunteerism, as well as group discussions on regional issues and development of specific action plans.

The participants also developed and initiated actual volunteer projects during one afternoon. These projects included visiting an orphanage in the village, planting trees in the park, doing anti-smoking campaign in the streets and promoting tourism in the bus station. Youth participants developed leaflets and promotional materials which they distributed in public places and at bus stations and posted in the walls of shops. They also had informal conversations with people in the street about further projects that could be done to beautify the city.

On the last day of the conference, the participants developed action plans which will be implemented this summer. Among the first projects that groups plan to implement are developing a TV program for youth, organizing a seminar in high schools about the danger of AIDS and drugs, and organizing a sport tournaments for school children. Other groups plan to conduct community projects that improve sanitation, programs that provide civic education prior to the elections, and cultural programs for youth. Following the implementation of these programs, IRI will assist the groups in assessing their projects’ effectiveness and comparing their programs with those that have been carried out by IRI youth network members in other regions of the country. The funds necessary to complete these projects are raised by the youth.

The conference also included a workshop in which youth discussed the upcoming parliamentary elections, their ideas to make this election free and fair, and ways to strengthen youth participation in this election. The workshop was useful in terms of building consensus among the youth from various political backgrounds.

This conference is part of IRI’s continued youth program in Azerbaijan encouraging youth to be

active in politics and their communities.

Polling Project

In June 2005, IRI began conducting a national public opinion survey with the help of a U.S. polling firm. This issues-based poll is expected to be completed in July. Using the survey research as a tool, IRI is working to assist candidates and political parties in their strategy and message development techniques. IRI will present the survey data to the political parties and independent candidates and work with them in developing messages that incorporate the issues that most concern the electorate.

Legislative Assistants Training

On April 22, 2005, IRI conducted a one-day seminar for the legislative assistants of Azerbaijani parliamentarians. Eleven legislative assistants, representing ten deputies from the ruling party YAP, opposition parties Popular Front, and Yurddash as well as independent parliamentarians attended the event.

The topics discussed were “Democracy,” “Balance of Power,” “Nature and Source of Power,” “Legislative Assistant's Performance” and the “Role of Parliament.” Discussions and the exchange of experience followed each session.

Constituency Offices

During this reporting period, IRI maintained its four constituency office programs in Gedebe, Baku, Nakchivan, and Lenkoran. The offices were founded in an effort to close the gap between constituents in the region and their elected parliament official in Baku. This quarter IRI continued exploratory talks with a member of parliament for possible additional office. IRI also calculated the total number of visitors to the constituency offices since their beginning of activity.

Baku- 1,328 persons (since January 2003)
Lenkoran- 1,379 persons (since January 2003)
Gedebe- 617 persons (since April 2004)
Naxchivan - 91 persons (since June 2004)

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Prior to IRI's work with the political parties, only limited work was being done within the parties themselves in the areas that IRI has identified as indicators of party strengthening and party inclusion of women and youth. Because of this, the baseline for certain indicators was zero.

Result 1: Political Parties will become more effective both internally and externally.

Indicators:

- Political parties develop political party organization plans and long-term political education strategies.

As a result of IRI's campaign training seminars, Popular Front, Democratic and Musavat parties, as well as a number of independent candidates, have utilized the materials from IRI trainings to develop their election headquarters organizational structure. As evidence of this, these parties have brought IRI their election campaign organization chart and asked for recommendations on how to improve it.

In addition, because of the campaign trainings, the Yeni Azerbaijan party has asked IRI for more information on the campaign organizational structure of the Republican Party in the U.S. and has utilized it as a model.

- Political parties will show an increase in communication with their local organizations and implement their issues in the national party platforms.

Musavat, Popular Front Party and Azerbaijan Democratic Party have started communicating with their local branches over the issue of fielding common candidates in the parliamentary elections. In the previous elections, the list of candidates was largely developed in Baku at the national headquarters.

Yeni Azerbaijan Party has held a party congress in which delegates from all regional branches have participated.

- Political parties show progress in developing issue-based platforms, utilizing the polling and research skills in their message development.

No results to report this period

- Political parties write campaign plans for the upcoming parliamentary elections, and implement get-out-the-vote efforts.

IRI has been consulting with all political parties and independent candidates as they work on their election strategy and plan. They are also utilizing IRI handouts from the trainings. Some independent candidates, such as Sevda Mammadova, Dadash Alishov, Vugar Mammadov as well as some political parties, such as ADP, have used these IRI materials for their internal trainings, which IRI has observed.

Result 2: Young men and women will become more politically active, showing they are a formidable force for democratic change.

Indicators:

- Large numbers of young men and women participate in the 2005 parliamentary elections.

No results to report this period

- Number of youth civic-oriented projects conducted with IRI's assistance increases.

The participants of the IRI youth conferences continue their community civic projects throughout 16 regions.

Examples include:

The youth in Tovuz (members of IRI's youth network) prepared a youth educational program that aired on local TV. IRI youth network participant Sahib Kerimov was the initiator and host of this program. The program aimed at teaching the youth how to utilize leisure time for educational purposes.

The youth in Nakhchivan (members of IRI's youth network) organized a clean-up day in the city. They involved about 30 students from local high schools in an effort to beautify a city park.

The youth in Imishli (members of IRI's youth network) held a concert and sport tournament for the orphans. The city mayor and members of the political parties also participated in the event and thanked IRI youth network activists for such a great initiative.

- Political parties show progress in strengthening their youth branches.

Five new and strong youth movements recently have been established around Azerbaijani political parties to prepare for the parliamentary elections. IRI has noticed an increase in the Azerbaijani political parties' attempts to engage youth in the political processes and strengthen their youth branches in the run-up to the November elections.

Some of these youth organizations, like Magam, directly consulted with IRI before being established. Prior to its establishment, IRI trained Magam members in coalition building, negotiation and consensus building skills. Additionally, members of other organizations have participated in IRI youth conferences on civic activism.

Result 3: Women become more involved in the political process both as candidates and as activists.

Indicators:

- Number of women candidates in the elections increases.

No results to report this period

- Women show increased understanding about the political process.

No results to report this period